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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is four-fold. Following a brief review of recent policy recommendations, two failed attempts to restructure teacher compensation, merit pay, and career ladders are reviewed. Second, research-based recommendations for new approaches to restructuring teacher compensation are synthesized. Next, based on one of these recommendations, actions being taken by an increasing number of states and districts to financially reward teachers who have become certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) are delineated and analyzed in terms of their advantages and disadvantages for reinventing teacher-compensation systems. Finally, policy implications are offered. The paper concludes that aligning teacher pay with NBPTS certification is a feasible alternative to reward highly accomplished teachers. Data provided by NBPTS in 2001 indicated an increase in the number of nationally certified teachers in states and districts where financial incentives are available. Policymakers can use certification as a tool to further reform and strengthen the teaching profession. However, national board certification is still too new and the number of nationally certified teachers too small to conclusively determine if it is improving teaching and learning. (Author/WFA)

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The Future of Teacher Compensation
Linking Salary to National Board Certification

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Over the years, policymakers at the national, state, and local levels have made several efforts to reform teacher compensation. Many policymakers and practitioners would like to pay teachers in a way that provides incentives for improving practice and student performance. Reformers have tried to use salary structures to encourage and reward good teaching. Two recent examples are, merit pay, designed to recognize and reward the best teachers, was implemented in a few states and districts and career ladder programs, implemented to alter the flat career structure of teaching by providing a hierarchy of professional responsibilities with concomitant salary increments (Ellis, 1984). For the most part, these efforts have not been successful in either producing lasting reforms in redesigning teacher compensation systems or in rewarding exemplary teachers (Cohn & Geske, 1990; Odden, 1995; Protsik, 1995; Urbanski, 1997). As a result, teacher compensation structures today look pretty much as they did decades ago. Most districts pay teachers according to a single-salary schedule that provides salary increases for education units, university degrees, and years of teaching experience.

The purpose of this paper is four-fold. Following a brief review of recent policy recommendations, two failed attempts to restructure teacher compensation, merit pay and career ladders, are reviewed. Second, research-based recommendations for new approaches to restructuring teacher compensation are synthesized. Next, based on one of these recommendations, actions being taken by an increasing number of states and localities to financially reward teachers who have become certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) are delineated and analyzed in terms of their advantages and disadvantages for reinventing teacher compensation systems. Finally, policy implications are offered.

Policy Background

A myriad of reports on teaching published in the 1980s created a heightened concern about the quality of the teaching force. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* recommended teacher salaries be "professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based." The goal of performance based-pay systems is to more directly tie pay to classroom skill, since the single-salary schedule solely rewards experience and education. Recommendations from the report suggest that the more direct the link between pay and performance, the greater the level of accountability teachers will have to both educational administrators and the public.

In 1986, both the Carnegie Commission and the Holmes Group advocated for a complete restructuring of the teaching profession, including salary structures. The Carnegie Commission report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, (1986), outlined eight policy areas. Three related either directly or indirectly to teacher salaries. They are:

(1) Restructure the teaching force, and introduce a new category of Lead Teachers with the proven ability to provide active leadership in the redesign of the schools and in helping their colleagues to uphold high standards of learning and teaching.

(2) Relate incentives for teachers to school-wide student performance, and provide schools with technology, services and staff essential to teacher productivity.

(3) Make teachers' salaries and career opportunities competitive with those in other professions.

The Holmes Group report, *Tomorrow's Teachers*, (1986) offered similar recommendations, proposing a differentiated, or "career ladder" structure for teacher certification and compensation. In an effort to make teaching a more attractive and rewarding career, these reports called for substantial increases in teachers' salaries. "At the same time...these reports

recommended that salaries should also be sensitive to market and student performance (Cohn & Geske, 1990, p. 243).

The earliest incentive programs, merit pay and career ladders, appeared to be a response to the fact that excellent teaching was not rewarded and that education policy needed to provide rewards to those who did a better job. According to Cornett and Gaines (1994), by 1985, over half the state had either enacted or approved plans for statewide implementation or pilot projects to provide incentives for teachers. These two attempts to restructure teacher compensation to address this inequity are briefly reviewed in the following section.

Merit Pay and Career Ladders

The debate on the use of merit pay continues into the 21st century as policymakers look at differentiated salary structure as one way to improve teaching and learning. In general, merit pay is a system that bases some or all of each teacher's compensation on periodic assessments of his or her performance. Two sides of this issue were presented in a 2001 edition of Educational Leadership.

Ramirez (2001) argues that merit pay undermines education because it "misconstrues and devalues the work of educators" (p. 16) and that "educators' jobs involve more than teaching academic subjects and often extend beyond the measurable" (p. 17). He states that since policymakers and school leaders are supposed to make changes that improve the education systems for which they are responsible, they need to investigate the value of merit pay by asking themselves a series of questions that examine issues of human motivation, business practices, fairness, effectiveness, unintended consequences, and whom to reward. When looking at business practices, Holt (2001) directs us to consider research conducted in business showing the

ineffectiveness of merit. In addition, he supports Ramirez's recognition of the pitfalls of merit pay because of the complexity of teaching. Holt (2001) states,

> when we measure student performance, we are measuring the response not of an isolated individual but of the system at that moment as it impinges on the student...the teacher is not an isolated player but stands at the sharp end of a system that stretches from the principal to the school board and beyond. The comparative assessment of merit, whether of student or teacher, is inherently subjective and unreliable (p. 313).

McCollum (2001) argues that merit pay, in fact, improves education. She describes a program in Georgia that challenges schools to make overall school improvement based on four challenging goals: academic achievement, resource development, educational programming and client involvement. Schools were given the freedom to design and implement individual plans based on their unique situation. According to McCollum (2001), the program avoids the pitfalls of many other merit pay programs because it allows for diversity and it combines criteria for teacher pay, school improvement, accountability, and teacher empowerment. Based on the Georgia experience, it makes sense to include faculty in the discussion and to allow for differentiation of plans based on context. Clearly, the context within which merit pay is discussed and/or implemented will have an impact on its potential success, hence, the debate continues. In addition, Ramirez (2002) recommends candid discussion and thoughtful deliberation of this issue in order to better create constructive policy.

. The major criticisms of merit pay is that teachers are required to compete against each other for a limited pool of funds and the assessment of teacher performance is based on administrative observation, which is not always objective. Kelley and Odden (1995) and Urbanski (1997) see this competition among teachers as detrimental to the collaborative culture found in most highly effective schools and thus is at odds with strategies to improve school performance.

Career ladders, by contrast, draw salary distinctions based on the duties that different teachers are expected to perform. In many cases, the problems that have plagued career ladders are similar to those that haunted merit pay. They are expensive to administer, and they generate dissatisfaction among teachers. Many of the early advocates of career ladders criticized merit pay plans because they generate competition and undermine collegiality and cooperation among teachers. They argued that the purpose of career ladders was to provide all teachers with opportunities for growth in their careers. Opponents of career ladders found that in some schools, opportunities for promotion were limited, often giving rise to a group of "elites" within a school. In addition, recent reports emphasize the need to keep exemplary teachers in the classroom (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) and career ladders have a tendency to promote teachers out of the classroom (Cornett & Gaines, 1994; Shedd & Bacharach, 1991).

The failure to implement successful incentive pay plans has left the single-salary schedule in place in most districts across the nation. Although it does have its advantages: it treats teachers across grade levels equitably; it objectively uses education and experience to determine pay; and it provides predicable budgeting for school district administrators, it fails to acknowledge excellence in teaching and it fails to hold teachers accountable for improving student achievement.

Historically, attempts to reform teacher compensation systems have changed over time to meet changing society, economic, and educational needs. Despite the apparent stronghold the single-salary schedule has in education, the systemic reforms taking shape today and the increasing emphases on accountability and standards-based teacher certification, for example, may require further changes in teacher compensation. "Current reform efforts are requiring

teachers to continually expand their professional instructional skills, take on management and leadership roles, and focus on results produced as much as services provided" (Kelley & Odden, 1995, p. 2).

The questions raised in the 1980s continue today. Can incentive systems be devised that will strengthen the performance of teachers and improve the achievement of students? And, can such systems make teaching more attractive, more rewarding, and more professional? In the following section, research-based recommendations for new approaches to restructuring teacher compensation are summarized

New Approaches to Restructuring Teacher Compensation

> *Until recently, attempts to change the way teachers are paid have foundered. Despite significant experimentation with career ladders and merit pay plans in the 1980s, it would be difficult to find many examples of changes in teacher pay enacted before the 1990s that survive today. Indeed, the single-salary schedule is so resilient that one could argue the "steps and lanes" of the salary schedule are the DNA of teacher pay.*
>
> *Allan Odden, 2000*

Currently, there are four main types of alternative compensation systems: (1) pay for performance; (2) knowledge- and skills-based pay systems; (3) school-based performance award programs, and (4) compensation for National Board certification (Goorian, 2000; Odden, 2000; Odden & Kelley, 1997). Pay for performance is a process whereby teacher pay is linked to improved student performance, was one of the recommendations made by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). Knowledge and skills-based systems, allow districts to reward teachers for acquiring knowledge and skills based on the needs of their schools. A number of states, including Ohio and Colorado have already begun to incorporate assessment tools designed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Praxis and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) assessments into their compensation structures. The third

alternative, school-based performance, "generally tie financial bonuses to specific goals and benchmarks...some school districts restrict the funds to school-improvement projects, whereas others give bonuses directly to staff with no restrictions" (Goorian, 2000, p.2). The fourth recommendation, linking salary to National Board certification will be discussed in-depth in the following section.

The creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in 1987 started a national impetus towards tying National Board certification to teacher compensation. Although NBPTS hopes to raise the professional level of teaching, it does not advocate for salary increases or bonuses for teachers who have achieved National Board certification. Nonetheless, a growing number of state legislatures and local school boards have begun to recognize the importance of the quality of teachers, and have begun to financially reward National Board certified teachers (NBCTs) and to provide incentives for a higher number of teachers to go through the assessment process. In the following section, state actions to provide salary supplements to NBCTs are delineated.

State Action to Provide Salary Supplements to NBCTs

According to the current information retrieved from the NBPTS website (www.nbpts.org/about/state_incentives_list.cfm), *State and Local Support & Incentives,* financial rewards and incentives have been implemented at the state and local levels in the following ways: (1) 32 states pay for or subsidize the $2300 fee, up from 24 in 1999 (16% increase); (2) 24 states accept National Board certification as all or part of the license renewal process up from 19 in 1999 (10% increase); (3) 36 states and Guam allow license portability, up from 16 in 1999 (40% increase); and (4) 32 states, again up from 24 (16% increase) offer financial incentives. In addition, at the local level, 170 local school districts offer fee support;

and 369 offer NBCTs salary supplements. This is significantly higher than the 129 local districts that reported providing salary supplements in 1999.

Although alternative salary compensation structures in general and salary supplements for NBCTs specifically are being implemented in a number of states, the literature is sparse on recommendations for creating a system that avoid previous "pitfalls." The following section provides discussion on the advantages and disadvantages for offering salary supplements for NBCTs, an overview of the strategies for salary supplements offered at the state level for NBCTs, their advantages and disadvantages, and a recommendation for an equitable salary supplement structure. (For specific details refer to the NBPTS web page, http://www.nbpts.org or check with your local school district or state education agency).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Salary Supplements for NBCTs

Historically, teacher salaries have gone through three major evolutions, boarding 'round, position-based compensation, and the single-salary schedule (see Kelley & Odden, 1995; Odden, 1995; Odden & Kelley, 1997; Protsik, 1995). A fourth evolution appears to be gaining momentum--salary supplements for NBCTs. The concept of paying teachers according to "merit" endures, but merit pay and career ladders failed because they could not be implemented equitably (distribution of resources) or effectively (production of outputs and outcomes). For the most part, incentives for NBCTs avoid concerns regarding the equitable and effective distribution of salary supplements.

Whereas teachers were opposed to merit pay and career ladders because they believed being rewarded was largely dependent on being "in" with the principal, National Board certification is a voluntary, confidential process, based on extensive guidelines applied by professionals who do not personally know the applicants. In addition, it is currently available to

an overwhelming majority of classroom teachers. Therefore, awarding salary supplements to those who become NBCTs negates the equity concern associated with merit pay.

Although merit pay and career ladders have been opposed because they have the potential to create negative relationships among teachers by fostering competition, the National Board certification process emphasizes the importance of teacher collaboration. One of the core propositions is that "teachers are members of learning communities" (NBPTS, 1991). Offering salary incentives for teachers who achieve National Board certification has the potential of increasing the effectiveness of schools by promoting collaboration.

While there are advantages to salary supplements for NBCTs, the disadvantages must also be addressed. The National Board is developing standards in 31 fields. As of July 2002, standards are available in 26 fields. Although support for salary incentives for NBCTs appears to be on the rise, there is one group who feels disadvantaged – those in the five undeveloped certificate areas. It is logical that those teachers feel slighted by salary incentives because there may not yet be a certificate available in their area of specialization. As the National Board completes the remaining certification areas, increasing the percentage of eligible teachers, this concern will dissipate. This also affects teachers who are either not in the classroom because they are running computer or literacy labs, for example, or are not teaching in their area of certification.

Another area of equitable concern pertains to minority candidates. According to Bond (as cited in Milanowski, Odden, & Youngs, 1998), "while the proportions of women and men passing the NBPTS assessments has not typically differed, African-American candidates were certified in lower proportions than non-Hispanic whites" (p. 89). Finally, there may be highly accomplished teachers who may chose not to pursue National Board certification for financial

and/or personal reasons. In a state such as North Carolina, where NBCTs receive a 12% salary increase, this is a significant concern as some teachers may not be eligible for this substantial financial benefit for several more years. The following sections provide a snapshot of state salary supplements, the variety of strategies employed, and recommendations for cost-effectiveness and equitable distribution.

State Salary Supplements

Currently 32 states offer salary supplements either in the form of "fixed sum supplements" or in the form of "percentage supplements" for NBCTs. Table 1 provides an overview of state salary supplements.

Table 1. State Salary Supplements and Incentives

State	Fixed Sum Supplement	Percentage Supplement
Alabama	$5000 annual salary increase for the life of the certificate	
Arkansas	A minimum of $2000 annual salary increase for the life of the certificate	
California	$10,000 one time bonus	
Delaware		12% salary incentive/year
Florida		10% salary increase for the life of the certificate
Georgia		10% salary increase
Hawaii	$5000/year for the life of the certificate	
Idaho	a one-time $10,000 bonus paid at $2,000/year for five years.	
Illinois	$3000 stipend for the life of the certificate	
Iowa	$2500/year for the life of the certificate	
Kansas	$1000/year for the life of the certificate	
Kentucky	$2000/year for the life of the certificate	
Louisiana	$5000/year until 2007	
Maryland	The Maryland State Department of Education will match up to $2,000 any stipend offered at the local level to NBCTs	
Massachusetts	$5000/year for the life of the certificate	
Mississippi	$6000/year for the life of the certificate	
Missouri		
Montana	One-time $3,000 stipends for NBCTs who continue teaching in the state	
Nevada		Annual 5% increase for the life of the certificate
New York	The New York State Master Teacher Program, as part of the Teachers of Tomorrow Program (May 2000), allows school districts to employ National Board Certified Teachers to teach in a low performing school and to assist in mentoring new teachers. These master teachers will receive an annual $10,000 stipend in addition to their regular salary and may serve for up to three years.	
North Carolina		12% salary increase
North Dakota	annual $1,500 for four years if they have served as a full-time classroom teacher in a North Dakota public school and has participated in efforts to develop and implement teacher mentoring and evaluation programs.	
Ohio	$2500/year for the life of the certificate	
Oklahoma	$5,000/year for the life of their certificate.	
South Carolina	$7500/year for the life of the certificate	
South Dakota	$2000/year for life of certificate	
Vermont	$2500 stipend	
Virginia	An initial award not to exceed 5,000 with a subsequent annual award of $2,500, for the life the certificate.	
Washington	a two-year $3,500 annual salary supplement	
West Virginia	$2500/year for the life of the certificate	
Wisconsin	$2500/year for the 2-10th year of the certificate	
Wyoming	$2000/year for three years	

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In addition to salary supplements, a number of states offer release time for teachers to work on their portfolios and prepare for the assessment center. California and New York offer additional stipends for teachers who agree to teach in a low-performing area and Illinois provides an additional stipend for NBCTs to mentor National Board candidates in academically at-risk schools or schools located in economically disadvantaged communities.

Strategies for Providing Salary Incentives to NBCTs

Four main strategies of salary supplements and the number of states using them are indicated in Table 2. Strategies A, C, and D involve fixed sum supplements; A is a fixed amount for the life of the certificate, C is a fixed amount for a specific period of time, often requiring additional duties, and D is a fixed one-time bonus. Strategy B provides percentage supplements for the life of the certificate. As of 2001, Strategy E is no longer being used by states.

Table 2. Number of States Using Each Strategy for Providing Salary Incentives to NBCTs.

	Fixed Sum Supplement	Percentage Supplement
Annual for Life of Certificate	A. 15 states (same as 1999)	B. 5 states (up from 3 in 1999)
Multiple Years (less than the 10-year life of the certificate)	C. 9 states (up from 0 in 1999)	
One-time Bonus	D. 3 states (down from 4 in 1999)	E. 0 (down from 2 in 1999)

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Four Strategies

Percentage supplements offer a viable solution for rewarding teachers for achieving National Board certification, but they raise a concern about equity. If administrators, educators and state policymakers agree that National Board certification is a rigorous process and all teachers who achieve certification are exemplary teachers, should they not receive the same incentive when achieving National Board certification? Since the percentage salary incentives

are on top of teachers' salaries as determined by the single-salary structure, NBCTs in different places on the schedule would receive a different amount of salary supplement. For example, based on a single-salary, if a teacher with a B.A. and 10 years of teaching experience earns $45,000 received a 5% annually salary supplement, the amount would be $2250; whereas a teacher with an M.A. and 10 years of teaching experience who earns $50,000 would receive an annual salary supplement of $2500. As the difference between years of experience and levels of education widen, the disparity in salary incentives received becomes even greater. Offering a fixed amount to NBCTs negates the equity concern by awarding equal financial recognition.

Another advantage of the fixed amount salary incentive is budgetary. State level policy makers and administrators have access to the number of teachers in their states and districts who are seeking National Board certification each year. It would therefore be feasible to calculate the amount of funds necessary to allocate in the budget for teachers' salaries.

Percentage increases have some advantages as well. First, they are consistent with most single-salary schedules in that step and lane increases are usually a constant percentage change. Second, as income increases, the marginal utility of an additional dollar of income usually declines. Thus, a teacher earning $25,000 annually is likely to receive a higher incentive to seek National Board certification from a $1000 increase than a teacher earning $40,000 annually would from the same increase. Finally, federal and state rates are such that a person making $25,000 annually will usually pay less taxes on an additional $1000, thus keeping more of it, than will a person making $40,000 annually.

A different message is sent to those who receive an annual award versus a one-time bonus. Although offering a one-time bonus may initially entice teachers to go through the process, it may ultimately send the message that it is merely another professional development

activity. Many teachers who have completed the process have indicated that the process was a highly beneficial professional development activity (Rotberg, Futrell, & Lieberman, 1998). Although this is a positive consequence, National Board certification was not designed to be a professional development activity, but as "a demonstration of...teaching practice as measured against high and rigorous standards...for experienced teachers" (NBPTS, 1991, p. 5). Therefore, a one-time bonus may give the impression that National Board certification holds no importance for teachers beyond the initial achievement. In the following section, recommendations are offered for an equitable structure for state and local policymakers to consider when formulating policy for salary supplements to NBCTs.

Policy Recommendation for an Equitable Structure

Based on the previous discussion, it appears that a fixed sum annual supplement for the life of the certificate (Cell A) has a higher probability of promoting equity and excellence in teaching. By awarding all NBCTs in a state or district the same salary incentive regardless of number of years experience and level of education, the impression of creating a hierarchy among teachers through their salaries is avoided. Although an annual percentage supplement (Cell B) recognizes the importance of continued financial recognition of excellent teaching, it creates inequities by awarding different amounts to different teachers based on number of years teaching and level of education. A one-time bonus, either as a fixed sum supplement or a percentage supplement, seems to negate the importance of National Board certification beyond the initial accomplishment. However, if a state or school district would like to reward teachers for achieving National Board certification and because of limited resources chooses to award teachers a one-time bonus, it is recommended that it be in the form of a fixed sum supplement (Cell C). In this way, all teachers who achieve will receive the same bonus amount.

In lieu of limiting salary incentives to these four cells, another option that perhaps could be considered is a combination. For example, in place of a 4% annual increase, school districts could offer a 10% one-time bonus and a 3% annual increase each year for the life of the certificate. Translated into fixed terms, NBCTs could receive a $3000 bonus and $900 annually for the life of the certificate. By combining two options in this way, school districts are acknowledging accomplished teachers after completing a rigorous assessment process, and at the same time, offering teachers financial incentives to remain in the classroom.

The literature on salary schedules suggests that "salary increases could be tied to professional licensure and certification such as that being developed by...the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards" (Elements of New Compensation Systems, 1995, p. 1). This idea has gained support from policymakers and researchers alike (Kelley, 1996; Kelley & Odden, 1995; Kelley & Taylor, 1995; Mohrman, Mohrman, & Odden; 1996; Odden, 1995; Odden & Kelley, 1997). The increasing number of states and localities that include a salary supplement for NBCTs indicates that support in this area is also growing with state and local policymakers.

Salary incentives tied to National Board certification is one way in which teacher salary structures can be revised to include recognition of accomplished teaching. Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that educators, administrators, and state and local policymakers legislate salary supplements for NBCTs in the form of a fixed sum annually for the life of the certificate for two reasons. First, financial incentives will probably encourage more teachers to pursue National Board certification. Second, unlike merit pay and career ladders, teachers' association support providing salary incentives for NBCTs. Hence, teachers who have achieved

National Board certification will be rewarded financially, on an annual basis, for their accomplishment.

Concluding Remarks

Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, states have been quite active implementing reforms in teaching and teacher preparation. Although thousands of pieces of legislation have been passed across the country, most policymakers, reformers, and the general public agree that most have not produced the desired results. "Legislators and policymakers now realize that piecemeal attempts at reform will not provide a cure for a system that was designed for America's past. They recognize that the expertise of the teacher is the most important school-based factor in determining student achievement" (Wise & Leibbrand, 1996, p, 202). This is supported by one of the conclusions in NCTAF's seminal report, What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future: "What teachers know and do is the most important on what students learn" (1996, p.6). Highly accomplished teachers need to be recognized and rewarded.

Although more and more states and localities are embracing the practice of providing salary supplements to NBCTs, this practice will no doubt continue to raise concerns. Ballou and Podursky (2001) clearly articulate this concern and respond to it, as follows:

> Compared to outside evaluators such as the National Board, a teacher's supervisor has a wealth of information about teaching performance…Students' standardized test scores and the opinions of parents and other teachers can also be taken into account. Local supervisors know their teachers personally. They see which teachers interact well with colleagues…who remains in the building late to help students, who devotes time and energy to extracurricular activities. There is nothing the Board knows from a teacher's portfolio that the building principal, the department head or other immediate supervisors cannot learn…Why then, rely on external assessments? The reply most often given is two-fold: 1) Local administrators often cannot or do not use the information available to them to form accurate assessments of performance; and 2) Even when supervisors know who the better teacher are, they lack the authority to adjust pay accordingly (p. 4).

NBPTS certification has only been available since 1993. But since that time, it has been receiving increased exposure through recognition in President Bush's 2001 legislation, *No Child Left Behind*, by President Clinton and Secretary of Education Riley, the 1996 NCTAF report, through an increase in state and local support for the process, in a number of education journals and newspapers, university, union, and school district participation, and an ever growing number of NBCTs. This increased recognition gives credence to the potential impact NBCTs may have on teaching and learning, hence the push to induce more teachers to become NBCTs will continue. One way to accomplish this is by offering a salary supplement.

Aligning teacher pay with National board Certification is a feasible alternative to reward highly accomplished teachers. Data provided by NBPTS (2001) indicates an increase in the number of NBCTs in states and localities where financial incentives are available. Policymakers can use certification as a tool to further reform and strengthen the teaching profession. They must however, remember that the National Board certification process is voluntary, rigorous and time consuming. A cursory look at the limited data indicates that incentive packages including salary increases or bonuses and payment for or subsidizing the fee can be the best methods for states to reward exemplary teaching and has the potential to increase their number of NBCTs.

National Board certification is still too new and the numbers of NBCTs too small to conclusively determine whether or not it is improving teaching and learning. Although limited, research to date validates the impact of NBCTs on teaching and learning. To strengthen this claim, a myriad of research projects are currently underway. "Facing up to increased pressure to prove it can make a difference in schools, [NBPTS] outlined plans for 22 new studies examining how its certification process affects the quality of teaching and learning" (Viadero, 2002, p. 7). Examples of areas of research include, determining whether NBCTs can turn around low-

performing schools, who seeks National Board certification; and how the process measure up to other models of professional development (for a comprehensive list of research completed and in progress, link to the NBPTS website at http://www.npbts.org and click on recent research and research archives).

Based on the literature on best practices in teaching, upon which the NBPTS core propositions are based, it can logically be concluded that an increased number of NBCTs has the potential to improve teacher performance in the classroom, school, community, and career development. Further, NBPTS has widespread support from teachers' associations and unions, educators, governors, corporate leaders, policymakers, and concerned citizens. While it is likely there is no compensation panacea to cure all of education's ailments, examining how teachers' pay can be more closely aligned with recognized best teaching practice is one important step towards improving today's schools to meet tomorrow's needs.

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